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U. S. Department of Agriculture

Housekeepers' Chat

Thursday, July 11, 1930

Not for Publication

Subject: "Attractive Living Porches for Summer." Information from Bess M. Viemont, Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. D. A.

Bulletin available: "Ice Creams Frozen Without Stirring."

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The other day I called on Miss Viemont, of the Bureau of Home Economics. She was very, very busy -- not working with gay cretonnes and bright chintzes, as usual, but with pencil and paper. She was concentrating. She took no notice of me. I coughed -- a polite cough which means, "Please look around -- don't you feel the presence of a visitor in your room?"

The cough distracted Miss Viemont's attention from her writing.

"Oh, it's you," said Miss Viemont. "And what, may I ask, do you want this time?"

You see what a reputation I have, around the Bureau of Home Economics. Every time my friends see me coming, they know I'm after something -- menus, or recipes, the latest styles in children's clothes, or what's new in vitamins. I didn't mince words with Miss Viemont. I told her frankly that I wanted some up-to-date information about living porches -- attractive furnishings, and so on.

"How strange," said Miss Viemont. "How strange, that you should ask me for this information the very day I'm to give a talk entitled, 'Attractive Living Porches for Summer.'"

"A talk!" I said. "Then you won't need to tell me a thing! Just let me have a copy of your talk. Please?"

Miss Viemont agreed -- and here is just exactly what she had written, about "Attractive Living Porches for Summer."

"These hot summer days make us want to move out-of-doors, to literally live on the porch," says Miss Viemont. "Busy folks are inclined to think of a porch as a place to spend leisure, to do mending, or to read the paper. But more and more it is being used for other purposes. Many families have one or all of their meals on the porch, and are happier for it. Certainly a breakfast in the cool morning air puts you in a better humor

for the day than the same food served in a warm room indoors.

"I want to tell you about two families who were 'porch-conscious,' and made the most of what they had. The first family, the Adamses, live in a small town, but their porch would be equally suitable for the farm or the suburban home. It extends across one side of the house. The living room opens on to one end, and from the other end, the kitchen can be reached through a short hall-way. You see this arrangement makes the porch easily accessible from any part of the house.

"But to make it the most useful, during the day and evening too, some kind of screens were necessary. Jimmy Adams, the 16-year-old son, made frames to fit the openings between the porch columns, and painted these frames a leaf green. Mrs. Adams debated whether to buy expensive wire screens that would last for several years, or select a cheaper material. Finally she decided to use mosquito netting. It is just as effective as wire screen, in keeping out flies and bugs, is much less costly, and it comes in many beautiful colors. Mrs. Adams chose a bright gold piece, because her porch is shaded, and a little dark. The gold netting makes a lovely background for the trellis of honeysuckle and clematis. On the living-room end of the porch, Mrs. Adams placed a brown grass rug, bordered with gold stripes. The chairs had slip covers of brightly figured cretonne. One cushion in the swing was made of purple sateen, the color of the clematis blossoms. Another cushion was of gold, and another of green. Electric wires were extended from the floor outlets in the living room, so that the porch could be lighted, and made as usable at night as in the daytime.

"This porch proved to be such a delightful spot that it was the gathering place for people in that part of town. Most any time during the day, one or two neighbors would run over to shell peas, string beans, or darn socks, while they talked over the news, and the fashions. Jimmy's friends thought the Adams' radio quite the best in town, and some of them were there every night. Even Mr. Adams' cronies enjoyed their evening talk-fests on the Adams porch.

"My other friends, the Clarks, live on a farm. For many years, Mr. Clark and the girls dreaded summer, and thought each summer hotter than the one before. They longed to have a cool, breezy back porch, where they could work, and serve meals during hot weather.

"Last summer Mr. Clark tore off the back door step, and built a large porch in its place. He screened it in, and it seemed to be just what they wanted. But after a few days Mr. Clark noticed his wife still worked in the kitchen, a good part of the time, and that they ate supper in the dining room, as usual. He was somewhat disappointed to learn that she did not enjoy the new porch as much as she had expected. True, it was a comfortable place to prepare vegetables, and to wash the milk separator, but it seemed too drab and uninteresting for a dining porch. Confident that it could be made an inviting place for the summer meals, one of the girls tried painting an old table and some chairs to use on it. These made such a difference that she painted the screen frames the same pale green. At the east end of the porch, where the sun shone, in, she planted yellow and white hollyhocks, and pink morning glories. At the other end, Mr. Clark put up a rack for the old trumpet vine.

"One day, while shopping, Mrs. Clark found a piece of plaid water-proof material in green, yellow, and pink, on a cream background. It was just the thing for seat pads on the green chairs. She bought enough to make the pads, and also to cut doilies for the table, so that tablecloths could be eliminated. That same day, in one of the stores, she found paper napkins in delightful pastel colors. There were yellow ones with orange borders, pink ones with rose, and lavender squares edged with purple. Mrs. Clark purchased several packages, and used them for all meals. They saved the linen napkins, that require so much time to wash and iron..

"The final touch to this porch's new dress was added when black tapes tied the cushions in place, and a black vase of an interesting shape held fresh flowers from the garden. A wonderful change has been made in this old, unattractive back porch, with very little expense, except for the screens. This year, instead of dreading the hot weather, the Clarks are looking forward to the first meal on their summer dining porch."

And so concludes Miss Viemont's talk, on summer living porches. I wish she had written more. When I read the description of the Adams' porch, with its furnishings in purple and gold and green, I decided that was just the kind of a porch I'd like to have. I wanted to take my sewing over to Mrs. Adams, and sit in the porch swing, and exchange recipes with my hostess. I'm sure she'd like to hear about my Ice Cream Sandwich.

And then, when I came to the Clark's porch with its yellow and white hollyhocks, and pink morning glories, right away I wanted to eat supper with the Clarks!

I think Miss Viemont has some extra copies of her talk. If you like, I'll send you one, in exchange for your name and address. And if you have a living porch that is especially attractive, won't you tell me about it? We might as well trade our good ideas.

And speaking of good ideas -- would you like to know about my Ice-Cream Sandwich? It isn't really mine, because I found it in the Ice Cream leaflet. Here's the recipe, for Ice-Cream Sandwiches:

Bake sponge cake in a pan twice the size of the ice-cream tray, if the dessert is frozen in a mechanical refrigerator. After removing the cake from the pan, cut it into two pieces, just the size of the tray. Place one section of cake on a platter, lay the mold of ice cream on the cake, and add the second portion of cake. Serve the ice-cream sandwich plain, with chocolate or other sweet sauce or with fresh fruit.

Friday: "Good Enough for Company."

